

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF EVERETT ALVAREZ'S CAPTIVITY IN VIETNAM

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, today I honor a superb leader, intrepid warrior, and outstanding role model. Fifty years ago on August 4, then-LTJG Everett "Ev" Alvarez, was shot down in his A-4 Skyhawk during a bombing mission in the Gulf of Tonkin. Everett was the first U.S. pilot shot down over North Vietnam and served 8½ years—the second-longest tenure of any U.S. prisoner of war. Over the years, hundreds of other American prisoners joined him in Hoa Lo prison and similar detention centers around the country. Despite starvation and other significant health challenges, Everett had the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual strength to endure the harshest conditions imaginable until his release on February 12, 1973.

Mr. Alvarez went on to complete a 20-year career in the Navy, retiring as a Commander in 1980. His service to our Nation, however, did not end there. Upon retirement, Everett earned a law degree and in 1981 was appointed by President Reagan to be the Deputy Director of the Peace Corps. Quickly proving his ability to lead outside of the military, a year later President Reagan nominated him in 1982 to be the Deputy Administrator of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, serving 6 years. Everett went on to serve on several boards, including the board of regents of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, is a lifetime member on the board of fellows of his alma mater, Santa Clara University, and earlier this year was asked by Secretary Hagel to be a member of the Vietnam War Commemoration Advisory Council.

His performance in and out of uniform has been widely recognized, to include the Silver Star, two Legions of Merit, two Bronze Stars, the Distinguished Flying Cross, as well as the Lone Sailor Award, an honor bestowed to sea service veterans for exceptional civilian leadership. Everett has made an indelible impact on his fellow prisoners, service members, and organizations he has been associated with over his lifetime. He is the co-author of two seminal works on the experience of living in captivity—"Chained Eagle" and "Code of Conduct."

Committing a lifetime of service to our Nation, Ev personifies the indomitable American spirit and is a shining example of strength through adversity. In an interview he once famously said, "Together we stepped into the dungeons and we faced the dragon, and we came out of it." On this occasion, I believe it is fitting to recognize Everett Alvarez's 50 years of distinguished service to our Nation.

U.S. CUSTOMS SERVICE ANNIVERSARY

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, today, July 31, 2014, marks the 225th

anniversary of the signing by President George Washington of legislation establishing the U.S. Customs Service, the oldest legacy agency of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, CBP, currently within the Department of Homeland Security. The U.S. Customs Service was created by the 5th Act of the 1st Congress.

The U.S. Customs Service placed controls on imports and exports and on shipping and trade, which were deemed essential by the founders of the Republic, and would have been impossible without implementation by an honest, resourceful, and efficient Customs Service. The original Customs collectors, the Customs houses, and today's CBP officers have stood for 225 years as the embodiment of Federal authority at our ports of entry.

After 225 years, the ever more complex demands of our economy and our society require CBP officers to remain alert and ready to perform on short notice a widening variety of tasks. Today's dedicated CBP personnel, and their predecessor Customs inspectors, have been the first line of defense against the entry into the United States of terrorists, terrorist weapons, illicit drugs and other contraband goods, while protecting the economic well-being of the Nation, and supporting American jobs, by facilitating legitimate trade and travel, and protecting this country's intellectual property rights.

ISRAEL

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I come to the floor today in support of the State of Israel, our closest and most critical ally in the Middle East. The escalating violence between Israel and Hamas is extremely disheartening. At this time of extreme instability and conflict in the region, the clear and unyielding support of the United States for Israel is more critical than ever. While we all hope for a peaceful ceasefire and a return to negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, we cannot ignore the current situation.

For weeks now, Israel has been responding to Hamas militants in Gaza whose clear mission is to exact a civilian death toll. It is an often-used tactic of Hamas, a designated foreign terrorist organization, to launch rockets into Israel at civilian targets. In doing so, they not only harm innocent Israelis but put Palestinian civilians in danger as well. Hamas's exposure of their own population to danger is made worse when they use civilians in Gaza as human shields. When Hamas used cement for the construction of tunnels to attack and kidnap civilians instead of using it for the construction of peaceful infrastructure projects, they literally chose the path of conflict over the path of peace. Israel has the undeniable right to defend itself against these threats to their civilians, and we must stand by our friend and help protect innocent lives in any way we can.

One thing we can do to continue to support Israel is to continue to support the Iron Dome missile defense system. The United States has provided financial support for this state-of-the-art defense system for years, and I, and many of my colleagues from both parties have been strong and continual supporters since its inception. The technology is extraordinarily effective at stopping rockets fired at civilian targets in Israel from Gaza; according to some estimates, it has intercepted about 90 percent of rockets which otherwise could have hit major population centers in Israel. Ultimately, the Iron Dome protects innocent lives, and I shudder to think of what this conflict's death toll in Israel might be without it. I am reassured that the Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee doubled the administration's funding request for the Iron Dome recently, and I commend my colleagues for this tangible show of support for Israel.

I, along with many of my colleagues, am deeply committed to the security of Israel, and I am saddened by the loss of civilian lives on both sides of the current conflict. Too much innocent blood has been shed already.

CHINESE DRYWALL

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I wish to join my colleague, Senator NELSON, in expressing frustration over the Chinese Government's failure to remedy the damages to homeowners, businesses, and contractors caused by Chinese drywall companies.

Beginning some 10 years ago, drywall manufactured by Chinese companies was imported to the United States. A significant amount of the imported Chinese drywall proved to be defective. In my State, this drywall was mostly used in homes and businesses that had suffered substantial damages from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In total, there were thousands of cases in the gulf coast area.

The drywall emitted sulfur gases, which caused physical damage to the homes and significant health problems for the residents. The sulfur gas severely corroded metals found in plumbing, electrical wiring, air-conditioning systems, and household appliances. Health issues included skin irritation, persistent cough, bloody noses, and asthma attacks. For many families who lived through these hurricanes, having to completely rebuild a home again was yet another obstacle to their recovery.

I have maintained that the Consumer Product Safety Commission should have served as the first line of defense in preventing this inferior product from entering the U.S. market. Nevertheless, manufacturers, no matter where they are located, have a responsibility to consumers harmed by defective products.

The homeowners sought relief in court, and most of the cases were consolidated in the Eastern District of